

## **Partnerships with AmeriCorps to Enhance County OERU Activities**

CDHS supports and encourages counties and collaborative agencies to consider the advantages of a partnership with the California Service Corps (CSC) AmeriCorps program. The AmeriCorps program provides counties with the opportunity to maximize the funding allocations by providing a low cost way to increase the work to increase health insurance enrollment and utilization.

CSC has contracted with the Children and Families Commission of Orange County to act as a statewide intermediary. The Children and Families Commission of Orange County currently participates in California Service Corps projects that utilize AmeriCorps members to provide services to hard to reach families. The Children and Families Commission of Orange County will provide each participating county with technical and administrative assistance. Details about how to participate in the in California Children's Health Service Corps are provided below.

### **AmeriCorps Overview**

Established in 1993, AmeriCorps provides thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds with full- and part-time opportunities to engage in service activities that make a demonstrable impact in their local communities. AmeriCorps joins a long tradition of programs that encourage and reward service programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Montgomery GI Bill, and the Peace Corps. In return for their service, AmeriCorps participants, known as members, receive a modest living allowance and an education award that can be used towards existing college loans or to pay continuing education costs.

### **Why Enlist AmeriCorps members?**

AmeriCorps members serve their communities and build the capacity of grassroots organizations to meet local needs. Under this proposal, up to 150 full-time AmeriCorps members are available to serve as lay community health outreach workers in counties that receive the allocation funding.

It is estimated that annual cost per AmeriCorps member is approximately \$24,000. This cost includes all stipend payments, all appropriate insurance and taxes, and technical assistance to maintain compliance with the federal AmeriCorps program. Counties would utilize the funding allocation received from the state to fund the costs associated with having an AmeriCorps member (estimated at \$24,000 per AmeriCorps member). At no cost to the participating county, each member who successfully completes their AmeriCorps service term (1700 hours of service) receives an educational award from AmeriCorps of \$4,725 that the member may use to continue their formal education.

### **What Services Can AmeriCorps Members Provide?**

The county or the Outreach Enrollment Retention and Utilization (OERU) coalition entity would train members as application assistors, and place AmeriCorps members in community based settings.

AmeriCorps member outreach activities would complement the OERU work done by the counties and community partners, and include:

- Outreach: activities to increase awareness of health programs, eligibility criteria, and steps needed to enroll and re-enroll children and families;
- Enrollment: Step-by-step assistance provided to families in completing one or more applications for health coverage;
- Retention: Follow-up activities to assist the family with maintaining their health coverage over time, including assistance with annual re-determination;
- Utilization: Activities employed to encourage families to use health care services once enrolled; and,
- Volunteer Generation: Identifying, recruiting and supervising episodic volunteers to assist in event driven outreach and enrollment activities.

### **Why Contract for AmeriCorps Members?**

AmeriCorps programs represent one of the most cost effective ways to provide services to a community, but they provide additional benefits including:

- Developing an effective way to use community members from within hard to reach and underserved populations to provide education and outreach to their communities;
- Growing a motivated volunteer pool after the completion of their year of service;
- Providing work experience and training that creates career paths for underrepresented populations;
- Encouraging interest and provides opportunity for continued education through the education award;
- Providing professional development to the unemployed or underemployed; and,
- Inspiring the growth of volunteerism within a community.

### **AmeriCorps Members**

- ***Member Eligibility.*** AmeriCorps members must be at least 17 years old. There is no upper age limit. Members must be U.S. citizens, nationals, or lawful permanent resident aliens. AmeriCorps counties recruit and select their own members and may impose additional eligibility criteria; however, selection must be completed in a non-partisan, non-political, non-discriminatory manner, and strive to include individuals with disabilities. Members may be recruited locally or through the AmeriCorps national referral system.
- ***Terms of Service.*** Programs may engage members on a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time members must serve as least 1,700 hours during a period of not less than nine months and not more than one year. Part-time members must serve as least 900 hours during a period of not more than one year. A 1,700-

hour member is considered a full-time AmeriCorps Member Service Year (1 MSY). Each AmeriCorps member can serve two service terms. Counties would contract for the AmeriCorps member services for the three-year term of the allocations.

**How Can Counties Join Forces with AmeriCorps to Enroll Children?**

The California Department of Health Services is supporting the use of AmeriCorps members. They are encouraging counties applying for outreach funding to use some or all of the funding to fund the \$24,000 per member cost. Each county that is awarded funds will work with Children and Families Commission of Orange County, the appointed agency and intermediary for this statewide California Service Corps project, to contract for AmeriCorps members. The Children and Families Commission of Orange County has experience both running an AmeriCorps program and as the intermediary for other statewide AmeriCorps initiatives.

For more information counties should contact:

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**What are the Next Steps?**

- Counties interested in participating in this partnership need to include a description of the project in the subcontract costs in the Plan and Budget submitted to the California Department of Health Services.
- For the approximate annual costs of \$24,000 per full-time member (1 MSY), The Children and Families Commission of Orange County would provide the partnering county with direct program support to assist in recruitment, screening and support for AmeriCorps members such as:
  - Training and technical assistance;
  - Administrative costs, which could include among other things, payroll services for members, brokering and provision of individual member health insurance, and AmeriCorps program reporting.